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Redevelopment Board Minutes 12-13-1999

Members Present:

Nora Mann

Barry Faulkner
Ed Tsoi
John FitzMaurice
Roland Chaput

In addition: Alan McClennen, Jr., Secretary ex officio

8:00 p.m. – Board convened in the auditorium of the Robbins Memorial Town Hall to conduct an Environmental Design Review hearing on the petition of Sunrise Assisted Living, Docket Number 3110.

Nora Mann outlined the history of the proposed development at this site.

Ed Tsoi stated for the record that he had a potential conflict of interest and he would send a letter to the Town Manager and Town Counsel and would abstain from voting until such time as the conflict was resolved.

8:15 p.m. – Brian Levey, an attorney with Bowditch and Dewey and counsel for the applicant, summarized the request and the history, land uses, planning studies, rezoning and lease negotiations that have occurred.

Mr. Levey noted that they were submitting three pieces of supplemental information at the hearing: a revised landscape plan, a modification to the proposed signage, and parking report submitted by a consultant outlining the expected usage of an assisted living facility.

John Noone, Vice President of Sunrise, summarized the history of the corporation and the specifics of the proposal.

Mr. Robert Weidknecht of Beals and Thomas, site engineers, summarized the land use proposal and site plan. He reviewed the existing conditions, the specifics of the proposal, the grading and drainage plans. In addition, he had noted that the petitioner had met with the Conservation Commission and that they would be filing a Notice of Intent at a later date. He also noted that the impervious portion of the site had been decreased by 14,000 square feet or twenty percent and that the drainage system to be installed would comply with best management practices. He also indicated that they were petitioning the MWRA to connect directly to the main sewer trunk line to the rear of the site. They also knew that they could connect to the trunk line in Massachusetts Avenue. He indicated that he had received approval from Richard Bento, Director of Public Works, and will formally apply to the MWRA.

Frank DiMella, architect for the project, reviewed the architectural proposal. He noted that the site was long and narrow, which provided certain design challenges. They decided to split the parking equally between the east and west ends of the site. They have broken down the facades to create the appearance of less mass; and, the roof edge is at the top of the third story with the fourth floor actually built within dormers. The proposed exterior finish is bricks and clapboard, probably synthetic, and panels. The pitched roof will hide the roof equipment; the flat roof will actually be seven feet below the peak. Mr. DiMella also showed the shadow analysis indicating the extent of shadows in June and December.

Andrew Leonard, landscape architect, reviewed the landscape proposals. He indicated that they hope to maintain the majority of the mature locust trees to the rear of the sidewalk at the front of the site. There is an extensive walkway system, garden sitting area, gazebo, and granite curbing. The lighting for the parking lot will be reduced in scale with ten-foot poles and the site will be completely irrigated.

9:10 p.m. – Nora Mann opened the meeting to questions from the Board.

Barry Faulkner had questions about deliveries. John Noone indicated that rubbish is picked up two to five days per week; food is delivered three to four days per week; and there are occasional FedEx deliveries. He indicated that they have the ability to control vendors by time and size, and generally they request deliveries early in the morning.

John FitzMaurice had several questions. Mr. Noone explained snow storage in the parking lot. Mr. FitzMaurice suggested that there should be a special permit granted to deal with the question of a commercial parking lot under the provisions of the Zoning Bylaw. Brian Levey stated that the petitioner had no problem with that. Mr. FitzMaurice also had questions about the height of the building at fifty-two feet versus the limit in height buffer area of forty feet.

Roland Chaput had several questions concerning catch basin, access to the proposed merchants' lot, lighting, and affordability.

Ed Tsoi asked specific questions about the proposed height of the building. Frank DiMella said that the flat roof was actually forty-five feet high and there were seven additional feet to the top of the parapet. After lengthy discussion, Mr. DiMella indicated that they would analyze the structural system of the building to see if they could reduce the height. It was noted that in the worst time of the year, reduction of one foot in height reduces the shadow cast by three feet.

10:00 p.m. – Nora Mann opened the hearing to questions from the floor.

Jan Bialach, a resident of 11 Reservoir Road and part of the family that owns 10 and 14 Reservoir Road, was concerned that yards will be cast in shadow.

Katheryne Paquet, 6 Reservoir Road, also expressed concern about shadows.

Chuck Pappas, President of the Chamber of Commerce and the owner of property at 1386 Massachusetts Avenue, had numerous comments and questions about the proposal as follows:

The petitioner did not meet with the Chamber of Commerce.

This is a new project; it is a residential use in the business district; and the Chamber doesn't feel that it should be there. He also noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals granted special permits to Jade Garden and Roma Thai which suggested that parking spaces would be available in the MBTA lot.

He had comments about the relationship between assisted living and the ABC Study and other development.

He felt that since there was a shift change at 3:00 p.m., there should be a traffic impact study to understand the implications of that new traffic on Massachusetts Avenue.

He indicated that Trader Joe's and Walgreen's have parking problems and need additional places for their employees.

Mr. Pappas recited the history of the thirty-five spaces and the agreement with Benchmark. He noted that the Chamber was looking for fifty spaces.

He felt that the project was too "sprawly."

He was confused about the parking spots, and he requested that there would be no fees for five years.

He indicated that pile driving is a concern because it is very disruptive.

He was concerned about the proposed relocation of the bump outs; the Chamber wanted them further west; now they are moving back to the east.

He felt that the trees shown on the rendering were misleading.

He had questions about the material boards; he felt that metal or vinyl siding was inappropriate adjacent to the Arlington Coal and Lumber Company, National Register property.

He had a concern about the estimated costs of living at the development

He requested the petitioner to look further at the impact on traffic.

He felt that the parking lot is undersize for the development.

Peter Feinmann, the owner of 1378 Mass. Ave., indicated that he has eight employees looking for parking and he is concerned that thirty-five spaces are not enough; he felt that this needed more serious study.

Stephen Crawford, a resident of 235 Sutherland Road, asked about the number of visitors expected at the facility. John Noone indicated that there would be six to eight visitors on weekdays and ten to twelve visitors on weekends. Their experience shows that there would be no more than one or two resident drivers at the site.

Andrew Fischer, Town Meeting member, asked about the timetable and stated that he felt the agreement at Town Meeting was that no project greater than Benchmark would be allowed.

Mr. David Carter, 2 Reservoir Road, had questions about revenue projections, the number of cars used by residents, and shadows.

Jean Hopkins, 105 Mt. Vernon Street, had a general statement concerning her feelings about assisted living not being a good use for Arlington.

Phyllis Bailey, member of the Assisted Living Task Force, a resident of 172 Brattle Street, indicated that the Assisted Living Task Force wants assisted living in Arlington and hopes that the developer will look into more affordability.

Kathy Paquet, 6 Reservoir Road, requested that the Town look at Symmes Hospital for a site for assisted living.

Nora Mann noted that this was a proposal that had shared parking solutions and had met the requirements established by the Board of Selectmen for the RFP distributed by the MBTA.

John FitzMaurice stated that he didn't feel that the Board could go against what Town Meeting had voted and that the developer will be able to address the issues that have been raised.

10:55 p.m. – Motion by Mr. Faulkner, seconded by Mr. Chaput, to recess the hearing to Monday, January 10, 2000; unanimous vote in favor.

11:00 p.m. – Director's Report:

The Board executed the decision for Antoine Jammal for 1432 Massachusetts Avenue, EDR 3107.

Minutes to be approved: Moved by Mr. FitzMaurice, seconded by Mr. Tsoi, that the minutes be approved; unanimous vote in favor.

Schedule: The Board agreed that the annual meeting would be held on January 3, 2000.

11:10 p.m. – Adjournment. Moved by Mr. Tsoi, seconded by Mr. FitzMaurice, to adjourn; unanimous vote in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Alan McClennen, Jr.